what comes in by Brokenmachine

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)
Genre: Angst, F/M, Hurt/Comfort, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Lucas is Good and cares about max, Self-Harm, max and eleven Will be besties and if not i will Kill, max deserves More, mike gets his head out his ass
Language: English
Characters: Eleven (Stranger Things), Lucas Sinclair, Max (Stranger Things), Mike Wheeler
Relationships: Eleven & Max (Stranger Things), Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Max & Mike Wheeler, Max/Lucas Sinclair
Status: Completed
Published: 2017-11-21
Updated: 2017-11-26
Packaged: 2022-04-03 05:01:26
Rating: Teen And Up Audiences
Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Chapters: 2
Words: 2,844
Publisher: archiveofourown.org
Summary:

"Oh," Max's hand fluttered to it, and Mike saw her fingers were shaking. "It's nothing. Don't worry about it."

or, it is something and max finally gets the apology she deserves.

1. the realisation

Author's Note:

> warning for some implied child abuse, mild injuries and a brief mention of self harm. nothing serious or too descriptive, but it is there.

The doorbell rang for the second time in twenty seconds, making Mike groan. Beside him, Eleven shifted, lifting her head from his shoulder. “Who is it?” she mumbled, blinking the fuzzy sleep look from her eyes.

“I don’t know,” Mike shut his eyes, leaning his head against hers. Eleven settled more into the curve of his body, nuzzling her nose against his cheek. Mike pulled the blanket further up, the sound of the rain hitting off the window, the tv faintly on in the background lulling him back into sleep. For a few seconds there was no movement, just him and El, like it should be, and then the bell went again.

“Shit,” Mike sat up, dislodging Eleven. She pushed herself up to lean against the arm of the couch. “I’ll be back in a second.”

“Hurry,” she smiled at him and his heart did that flip thing it had only ever done around her.

Mike jogged to the door, unlocking it and looking outside. The cold air made him shiver and it was getting darker, heading for six o’clock, rain battering off the ground in sheets. He squinted and saw no one. Huffing in frustration, he began to turn around, then caught sight of someone walking out of his driveway.

“Hey!” he called, waving his hand. The figure turned back and his stomach fell. It was Max, dressed in only a hoodie and jeans.

She stepped back to the front door and Mike felt his annoyance already growing. When she got to the door he answered, “What are you doing here?” It sounded more accusatory than he meant but he didn’t find himself regretting it.

Max looked up at him, hood pulled low over her face, skateboard tucked under her arm and shouted over the rain, “Lucas is coming to get me from this street, I was going to see if I could wait here.”

“Can’t you just wait in the street?” Mike asked, the words slipping out, and her face, too shaded by the hood to see properly, fell. She turned to go and he grabbed her wrist. “Hey, no, sorry. You can come in.” He made sure not to sound too happy about it.

Max hugged her skateboard to her chest. “Thank you.”

Mike stepped aside to let her in and she stepped past him, wiping her feet on the doormat. Mike winced at the water trails that dripped from her, wetting the floor. “Mike? Who is it?” Eleven came to the kitchen, wrapped in a blanket, smile on her face. It slipped off when she saw Max. “Oh.”

Max sighed, pulling down her hood. “I’ll be out your hair in a second, Hopper, I’m just waiting for Lucas.”

Eleven stepped closer to Mike, hand encircling his wrist. Mike smiled at her gently, then looked back at Max. “When’s Lucas coming?”

Max looked up at the clock, which read around quarter to six, and said, “Fifteen minutes.”

“Okay,” Mike said. “You can wait here. We’re just going to—“

Eleven interrupted. “What happened?”

Max looked at her, confused, and that was when Mike saw it. A sizeable bruise had made the right side of her face turn a dark purple red, a nasty looking cut starting at her cheekbone and travelling to the corner of her eye still bleeding a little. “Holy shit.”

“Oh,” Max’s hand fluttered to it, and Mike saw her fingers were shaking. “It’s nothing. Don’t worry.”

“What happened?”

“Nothing, Wheeler,” she glared at him, and he finally felt a little concern settle in his stomach. “Maybe I will wait outside.”

She made a move to the door, but the lock clicked shut and she turned to Eleven. “Stop it.”

Eleven shook her head, concentrating on the door. Mike felt a little worry, knowing how drained she got using her powers since the Mindflayer, but kept watching Max.

Max squeezed her eyes shut, holding her skateboard against her chest. Mike saw her hands were shaking, blood leaking from under her nails. He looked at Eleven and she looked at him.

“It’s fine,” Max said, voice trembling. “I just need Lucas to come.”

“At least let me clean that,” Mike countered, surprised to find he was genuine. He stepped forward and with a gentleness he didn’t know he possessed for Max pulled the skateboard from her. He placed it on the floor and saw Eleven let go of the door out of the corner of his eye, wiping her nose.

Max opened her eyes that were filled with tears. Mike felt something inside him twist. “I just need Lucas to come,” she repeated and Mike could see she was shaking harder, face slowly draining of colour.

“Come and sit down,” he said, taking her elbow and pretending to not notice the way she tensed up at his touch, following him to a kitchen chair. He noticed the way she followed everything he said immediately, sitting down and staring at her lap like it was the most interesting thing in the world.

Eleven watched from the corner of the room as he wiped the blood from Max’s face, smearing some antiseptic cream over the cut. That was as far as his medical expertise went and he sat back. Max looked away from him, head still bowed and hands clenched tight.

Eleven kneeled down next to them and looked at Max. The two girls made eye contact and Mike watched as she lifted her hand and traced it over the bruise. “Bad men?”

“Yeah,” Max admitted, voice unsteady. “Bad man.”

Eleven sat back on her heels, eyebrows furrowed. Mike began to put two and two together. “Billy?” he asked, and her eyes flicked to him,

desperate and scared. He felt something rise in his stomach, a protective urge he only felt for his friends.

Max wasn't his friend.

"I just need Lucas to come," she said, blinking hard. A tear slipped down her cheek and Eleven caught it on her finger.

The doorbell rang and Mike stood up, heading to answer it. He opened the door and Lucas stood there, jacket hood pulled up and holding a spare one to his chest.

"Hey, Mike, weird question but is Max here?" Lucas glanced around.

"Yeah, she is," Mike let Lucas past, eyebrows furrowed.

Lucas spotted Max and walked over, holding out his hand. "I have a jacket," he mumbled, and her face crumpled.

Eleven stepped back, alarmed, as Max began to cry. Lucas crouched down, wrapping his arms gently around her middle. One of her arms looped around his neck, sleeve slipping down. Mike felt sick when he saw cuts lining the inside of her wrist and looked away.

"Come on," Lucas said with a kindness Mike hadn't heard a lot. "Put the jacket on, Maxy."

"Don't call me that," she huffed through her tears, wiping her eyes and pulling away. She slipped her arms through and zipped it up. Lucas took her hand, lacing their fingers.

"Thanks, Mike. We'll go now," he said, stepping to the door with Max, who followed him so close she looked like a shadow. He bent down and grabbed her skateboard, tucking it under his arm.

"Thank you, Mike," she murmured. "Sorry for interrupting you and El."

"It's okay," Eleven said from just behind him, making Mike jump. Max looked at her and something in her stare softened, another tear trailing down her cheek. "I know about bad men too."

Max bit her lip, nostrils flaring in an effort to not cry, and Lucas rubbed his thumb over her hand, watching her closely.

“You can come back if you need to,” Mike said without even meaning to speak. Max looked at him uncertainly. “Don’t stand in the rain.”

With a weak smile, she saluted and Lucas pulled her out the door, into the pouring rain.

2. the apology

Notes for the Chapter:

> more referenced child abuse. nothing too graphic and brief allusions to self harm but nothing mentioned.

As the week went on, Mike watched the bruise fade from Max's cheek. She'd received a few curious-bordering-on-mean remarks from their caring classmates and had replied very characteristically with a middle finger that shut them all up. The worry had never quite left Mike's stomach since that night she arrived at his house, soaking wet and bleeding, but it had loosened slightly as the week went on without a hitch.

That was until Thursday, when Max didn't show up through first period. Or second. Mike could see Lucas growing antsy, shifting in his seat and glancing towards the desk she sat at in their math class. Personally, he wasn't too worried, but the sight of his friend being so distressed worked a knot into his throat he couldn't swallow.

Dustin noticed it too. "Whoa, Lucas," he said at break, when they were all sitting outside. "I'm sure Max is fine."

Lucas glared at him, making El shrink back to Mike's side. He squeezed her hand comfortingly. "How do you know? What if she's hurt?" Even Dustin moved back at the anger in his voice and his brow furrowed.

"No need to be rude, man. I'm just—"

"There she is," Will interrupted from where he was sitting with his cheek against Dustin's shoulder. He looked exhausted still, but slightly better than he had after the Mindflayer, his skin a healthier colour and his hair a little shinier looking. Even though it had been months, Mike knew Will's body was still recovering, having never quite fought off the horrible sickness he was wracked with after the Incident.

They all turned and looked to see Max walking towards them, skateboard tucked under her arm. Lucas scooted aside to make room for her but she walked right past them, hair flying in the wind.

“Hey, Max!” Dustin called and she whirled around.

“What?”

“Where are you going?” Lucas asked, sounding genuinely confused. Mike was too. They still had another ten minutes of break; where would she be needing to go to?

“Since I’m still not in your fucking party, I thought I’d give it a rest today,” she spat, taking them all by surprise. Although everyone knew Mike didn’t harbour the warmest feelings for Max, it had long been since agreed she was a Somewhat Member of the Party.

“Hey, what?” Lucas stood up, grabbing her wrist when she turned to storm away. “Nuh—uh. Come sit—oh.”

“Yeah,” Max pushed her face up to his. Mike caught sight of a yellowing cut through her eyebrow and a bloody patch in her hair and winced, shutting his eyes. The worry returned full force, twisting in his stomach like snakes. “Take a good fucking look, Stalker. Look at the freak of the freak show, the abused little girl who can’t make a frie—“

“Hey,” Lucas shook her arm and she winced. He pulled his hand back like he’d burned her and Mike had a flash to when her sleeve slipped back at his. Lucas must know. Mike wondered how much Max had told him and how much he'd worked out himself.

“Hey,” he said again, softer. Max stared at him, her chest heaving, and he held out his hands in a surrender motion. “It’s okay.”

“No, it’s not,” she whispered, barely audible. She turned to leave and as she did she made eye contact with Mike for the briefest of seconds, showing him her pain, her sadness, her *grief*, and then she disappeared around the corner.

“Shit,” Lucas sighed, dropping his head into his hands. “Shit.”

Mike felt the snakes begin to writhe in his stomach again, but this time it was from guilt. Who can't make a friend, she had almost said. It was his fault she felt that way, he knew. He had been moody and mean, pushing her away before she'd even tried to latch on. Been angry at her for things she didn't even know about.

He looked up across the table and made eye contact with Will. His best friend held his gaze, lifting his head from Dustin's shoulder. Lucas sat back down next to El, completing their little circle on the ground. Mike was surprised to find he could feel Max's absence. The cut on her eyebrow swam in front of his face, as well as the bloody patch in her hair.

Will raised one eyebrow and Mike knew what he had to do.

It took almost the whole of the next period to find Max. He knew she wasn't in hers because they shared third period; history with Mrs. McIllwaine. He searched the whole school, all the empty classrooms and the bathrooms, but he couldn't find her anywhere. The whole time his conscience screamed at him until he was almost running, not calling her name in case he drew any teachers to him.

Eventually he gave up, rubbing a hand over his face and turning to go to class. He almost began to walk when he caught a glimpse of red hair outside the side entrance and immediately began to walk to it.

He opened the door and sure enough, there she was. She sat on the steps, her backpack beside her and her skateboard underneath her feet. Mike scrunched his face up at the smoke coming from her cigarette but sat down beside her anyway.

She didn't look at him and he didn't speak, choosing to watch her instead. The blood in her hair had turned sticky and dry, making it look like a rather bad hair dye job than an injury. Her eyebrow had swollen, the cut a raw red colour that made his stomach twist.

When it became obvious she wasn't going to speak he did. "Who's hitting you?" his voice was shaky and thin, making her glance at him with vague surprise in her eyes.

"Why do you care," she snapped, putting out her cigarette on her

skateboard. Mike watched it sizzle. Her question left him stuck for words. Why did he care?

Because it's the right thing to do, he thought, and she stared at him.

"Well I don't need your pity worry, okay, Wheeler?" she spat, eyes narrowed. He realised he must have spoke allowed.

"No, I mean—" he stopped himself and let his head drop into his hands. "I mean, I'm not pitying you. I feel bad."

"That is fucking pi—"

"For being a dick to you," he interrupted, making eye contact. She stopped dead, suddenly looking unsure. "I feel bad for that." Max stared at him, speechless, and he flushed, looking down at his hands. "I wanted to say I'm sorry for that. You didn't deserve it."

Max wrapped her arms around herself, looking at the ground. A quick glance told Mike she was on the verge of tears and he felt even more ashamed. "You were obviously going through shit," she mumbled, breathing out fog in the chilly air. "I wouldn't have helped."

"The shit I was going through had nothing to do with you, and I should have remembered that," he countered, feeling so *so* awkward but also kind of light. "Moving is hard enough on its own—I remember moving in kindergarten. I couldn't even imagine doing it now."

Max huffed a laugh but it sounded more like a sob.

"I'm sorry," Mike reached out and touched her arm. She looked at him. "I'm really sorry."

Max looked at him, eyes brimming with tears, and then smiled. She linked their hands and squeezed for a second and then let go, turning to stare out at the carpark. "It's okay."

Mike kept staring at her. She was curled in on herself, looking one hundred times lighter but still so, so lonely. Her red hair hung around her face and her whole body shook from the cold. Without even thinking about it, he moved her backpack to the step behind them

and scooted next to her, wrapping an arm around her shoulders.

Max leaned against him, turning her face into his shoulder. He felt the wave of protectiveness wash over him like it did with Will, with Lucas and Dustin, with El. Remembered it from the weekend when he first saw her bruised face and didn't push it away this time.

"Is it Billy?"

Max sniffed against him, a hand coming up to wipe her eyes. "Yeah," she admitted, and broke down. Mike sat with her while she cried, leaning his head on hers. He got a little teary himself and blinked hard.

It didn't take long for Max to clamp down on herself, stilling under his arm and swiping an arm across her face. "Sorry," she muttered.

"It's okay," Mike slid his arm off of her and stood. "It'll be fourth period soon. You coming?"

Max nodded, standing up shakily and picking up her skateboard. Mike turned to go with her and then paused.

"You can come by mine tonight," he offered. "If you want. The others are coming round and I can clean your cut."

Max laughed, "Yeah, because you did such a good job last time," but she looked delighted to have got an invitation. He knocked her with his shoulder gently and the returning grin he got was so bright he couldn't do anything but smile back.

Notes for the Chapter:

> about time max gets that apology! thanks for reading x

Author's Note:

> a little darker than the other stories i've written, but max deserves more love and as much as i love mike he needs to get with it.

I've been in max's place in terms of moving to a new country (state, whatever) and it is terrifying. She deserves more than what she got and i hope the writers do justice for her in season 3. GIVE ME MAX AND ELEVEN FRIENDSHIP.

there will be another chapter where max gets the apology she deserves, so look out for that!

leave a kudos or comment if you would like to! i love hearing what you think
x